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Directorate of Intelligence
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CENTRAL AMERICAN PEACE PLAN

WEEKLY UPDATE

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Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D. C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

CENTRAL AMERICAN PEACE PLAN WEEKLY UPDATE

24 March 1988

This weekly Situation Report is prepared by the [redacted] Office of African and Latin American Analysis. This paper was coordinated with the Directorate of Operations. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to [redacted]

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Perspective: Reactions to Nicaraguan Invasion

The Central American democracies are divided on how to respond to last week's incursion into Honduras by Sandinista troops, but all claim that the peace accord is still viable. Costa Rican President Arias publicly condemned the Sandinista incursion and reiterated his strongly held view that the Nicaraguan conflict should be settled by negotiations. El Salvador's President Duarte--busy preparing for last weekend's legislative elections--limited his actions to phoning Nicaragua's president to protest the Sandinista violation of Honduran territory. Guatemala, meanwhile, has refused to criticize Nicaragua directly. As Sandinista troops returned to Nicaragua, Honduran President Azcona publicly reaffirmed his government's commitment to the Central American peace plan and described the border incident as the result of an internal Nicaraguan dispute.

Nicaragua is intensifying diplomatic efforts to deflect the negative publicity generated by the incursion. [redacted] the Sandinistas persuaded the UN Secretary General to send an official delegation this week to investigate the situation along the border and report back to the Security Council. Managua's efforts are clearly aimed at refocusing international attention on the insurgent camps along the border and the US exercises in Honduras. Nicaragua also announced it was pressing forward with its case against Honduras in the World Court, accusing Tegucigalpa of allowing insurgents to operate from its territory. Finally, Managua probably will portray this week's cease-fire talks with the rebels as further evidence it is willing to seek a diplomatic end to the war. [redacted]

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Democratization

- Nicaragua refused again to grant a television license to a group of private businessmen. [redacted] Meanwhile, all radio stations are required to join a government network three times a day until Managua lifts the state of alert declared last week. [redacted]
- A Sandinista party official claimed that circulation of the independent daily La Prensa is at an all-time low of 20,000 and that opposition radio stations lack a large audience. [redacted] He added that hardliners now control the Ministry of Interior and implied that they will crack down harder on the opposition. [redacted]
- Proregime mobs backed by Nicaraguan police and other officials seized merchandise on 15 March from private vendors to enforce new price restrictions. [redacted] The press reports that the goods were turned over to a zonal office of the Sandinista party. [redacted]
- An opposition labor march scheduled for 20 March in the Nicaraguan town of Masaya was canceled. [redacted] The government had delayed granting permission, and government and party officials had threatened violence. [redacted] seven labor organizers were arrested in Masaya on 15 March. [redacted]

Cease-Fire/Amnesty

- Nicaraguan cease-fire talks opened in Sapoia on 21 March with each side agreeing to a truce for the duration of the three-day session. [redacted] the proposals tabled by both sides repeated earlier demands, with the rebels calling for amnesty for political prisoners, full freedom of the press, and suspension of the draft, while the government's proposal stressed cease-fire terms, disarmament, and reintegration of the insurgents into political life. [redacted]

National Reconciliation

- Nicaragua's National Reconciliation Commission appointed two members on 18 March to prepare a final report for the Central American foreign ministers on Sandinista compliance with the peace plan. The government representative complained that Cardinal Obando's assessment was unfairly critical of the regime. The

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government also failed again to respond to commission requests for information on alleged human rights abuses but said it would reply at the next meeting on 24 March.

- Eight of the 14 Nicaraguan opposition parties that had walked out of the national dialogue in December attended the session on 21 March. Daniel Ortega had scheduled the dialogue session unilaterally after opposition leaders rejected his offer to resume talks when they met with him on 17 and 19 March. All 14 parties said they would still push their demand for constitutional reform.

International Verification

- At Nicaragua's request, the UN Secretary General will send a small fact-finding team to the Honduran border, to determine whether Sandinista troops had crossed the border but have been denied permission to visit the Honduran side. The Secretary General excluded from the team staff members who participated in the joint UN/OAS technical mission supporting the International Verification Commission.

Other Developments

- Daniel Ortega announced on 19 March that Nicaragua is reactivating its case against Honduras at the International Court of Justice protesting the presence of rebel bases in Honduras.
- Peruvian President Alan Garcia is considering a trip to Nicaragua to demonstrate solidarity with the Sandinistas,
- Nicaraguan Interior Minister Tomas Borge will travel to Uruguay and Argentina in mid-April
- The Salvadoran Democratic Convergence, a leftist political umbrella group, boycotted the 20 March elections, while the insurgents conducted an unsuccessful campaign of violence to intimidate voters and to undermine the electoral process.